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LANL Recovery Act News Flash

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Minimizing Waste During Demolition

Demolishing 24 buildings and excavating a six-acre waste disposal site generates a lot of waste. Disposing of the waste can be expensive and poses a number of logistical challenges.

"Waste transportation and disposal accounts for nearly half of our \$212 million budget," said Gordon Dover, deputy director for the Technical Area 21 (TA-21) Recovery Act projects at Los Alamos National Laboratory. "We've addressed this challenge through competitive contracting and by segregating waste as much as possible before it leaves the site."

To minimize costs and the waste that goes to disposal facilities, crews strip all fixtures, equipment and pipes from buildings prior to demolition. Clean metal is recycled, usable equipment and fixtures are sent to salvage, and what's left is essentially the shell of the building.

"The fee that disposal facilities charge is about \$1,000 per cubic yard for low-level waste, but it's only \$100 per cubic yard for industrial waste," Dover said. "By aggressively segregating waste prior to demolition, we minimize costs and the amount of material that goes to disposal facilities."

More of the waste generated by building demolition has been industrial waste than originally



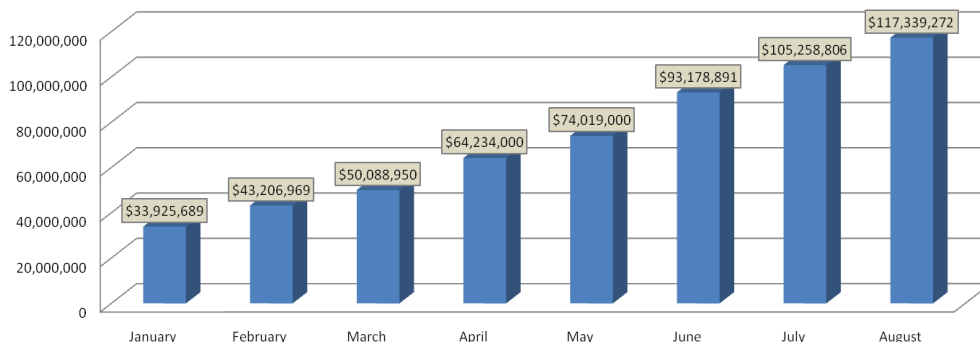
Segregating waste before it leaves the site minimizes costs and the amount of material that goes to disposal facilities.

planned, a significant factor considering that many of the buildings contained asbestos and some were research and production facilities that used materials such as plutonium, tritium and americium.

Contaminated material is carefully sampled and disposed of appropriately. Waste is packaged and sent to facilities in Utah, Colorado and Texas by truck. With 20 of the 24 buildings at TA-21 already demolished, more than 300 tons of metal have been recycled, and more than 6,500 cubic yards of waste have been trucked off-site.

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**LANL Recovery Act spending
(running total)**





“By aggressively segregating waste prior to demolition, we minimize costs and the amount of material that goes to disposal facilities.”—ARRA Deputy Director Gordon Dover

This News Flash is provided by the Environmental Programs Directorate of Los Alamos National Laboratory.

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Partnership Smooths the Path

Working closely with Los Alamos County to coordinate emergency procedures and truck traffic is an important part of the outreach effort for the Technical Area 21 (TA-21) projects.

“It’s a partnership that’s worked well,” said ARRA Projects Deputy Director Gordon Dover.

TA-21 project staff and county emergency management personnel worked together to develop an emergency alert system that could be activated in the event of an incident during the excavation of MDA-B, a 60-year-old waste dump. MDA-B contains plutonium-contaminated items and canisters that once held shock-sensitive chemicals.

Demolishing 24 buildings and excavating a waste dump generates a lot of waste, which means a lot of truck traffic on county roads. With one of the main streets in Los Alamos under construction, coordinating truck traffic with construction activity was crucial to minimize impacts to traffic while still making progress on both projects.

From the county’s point of view, a little coordination goes a long



The Lab and Los Alamos County work together to coordinate waste transportation and road construction.

way.

“We’ve developed a good working relationship with the Lab on several important clean-up projects,” said Los Alamos County Public Information Officer Julie Habiger. “We were involved on the TA-21 and MDA-B projects in the beginning stage. We were encouraged to offer our perspective as local government and give them our suggestions about working with our citizens. Plus, because we’re educated and involved in the projects, it makes it easier for us to respond to citizen questions and concerns as they arise.”

County Administrator Anthony Mortillaro agrees.

“Continued federal funding for environmental remediation and restoration projects like TA-21 and MDA-B is critical to our economy, our future development plans for DOE land transfer parcels, and overall quality of life,” he said. “When we’re engaged and involved early on, we can better understand the challenges the laboratory is facing. As a result, we’re able to evaluate and support their projects and requests with our congressional delegation.”

The Digging Goes On...

Excavation of the Lab’s oldest waste disposal site, Material Disposal Area B (MDA-B), began in June.

Because MDA-B was used as a waste disposal site in the ‘40s, excavation is being done inside sturdy metal structures that resemble large quonset huts.

Currently, excavation is being conducted in six of the structures while others are being built.

The material being excavated is monitored via closed-circuit television and tested before it is sent to a waste disposal facility. To date, most of the waste dug up has been run-of-the-mill trash, other than one piece of pipe that had a high concentration of plutonium.

A number of safeguards ensure worker and public safety, including air monitoring systems, high-particulate air filtering inside the structures, and monitors that detect radioactive contamination.

Waste

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With about 50,000 cubic yards of waste generated by building demolition and excavation of the waste dump, more trucks will roll as the waste transportation effort reaches its peak.

“Our waste transportation effort is ramping up,” Dover said. “We expect the number of trucks to double and remain steady over the next few months as we dispose of the bulk of the waste.”